

October 10, 2003

Janine A. Rees  
Industrial Hygiene Supervisor  
Department of Labor and Industries  
315 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 200  
Seattle, WA 98104-2607

Dear Ms. Rees,

The City of Seattle Fire Department is doing an investigation of questions raised about employee health issues at Fire Station 31 and whether these health concerns might be related to the building. Mayor Greg Nickels and I agree that there is nothing more important than the health and safety of those men and women who risk their lives to serve and protect us.

For this reason we have appointed a team of experts in health screening and epidemiology, as well as a representative from Fire Station 31 and a Seattle Fire Department safety officer, to look into these complaints (see enclosed release).

I am aware that Seattle Firefighters Local 27 has filed a complaint with Labor and Industries relating to Station 31. We not only welcome the participation of Labor and Industries but would like your assistance as soon as possible. We would also like to have a representative from the Fire Department attend the opening conference. The mayor and I want to conduct an open and transparent investigation to accurately find answers that will ensure the safety and health of my members. Mayor Nickels has directed City Staff to provide you with whatever you require to complete your work.

I have also submitted a request to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health to join in our investigation in any way they feel is appropriate.

Our panel of experts have been asked to conduct a thorough analysis to determine if those who work at the fire station are experiencing an unexpected level of health issues and, if so, why. In addition to the panel, Prezant Associates, Inc., one of the Northwest's preeminent industrial health and safety firms, has been hired to conduct environmental tests of the Station 31 building to determine if there any environmental issues that need addressing.

To give you some background, in 2001, an industrial health and safety expert inspected and tested the building and an epidemiologist from Seattle-King County Public Health Department recently reviewed eight cases of cancer among current or former firefighters who worked at Station 31.

October 10, 2003  
Page 2

The industrial hygiene study found that the measured pollutant concentrations were all below Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act worker health standards. Similarly, the epidemiological review found that it was very unlikely that the eight cancer cases were related to the building. While those eight cases were all of which the city has direct knowledge, firefighters believe there may be more.

As you can imagine, the emotional impact of this type of concern is significant, not only among the workers and their families, but also for the Department as a whole and the general public. Please advise me at your earliest convenience as to when, and what assistance you can offer.

Very truly yours,

Gary P. Morris, Fire Chief  
Seattle Fire Department

GPM:db

Enclosure

cc: Tom Fitzsimmons, Department of Ecology